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ABSTRACT

Because any reading or writing research project or teaching method rests on some kind of epistemological assumptions and some models of reading and writing processes, a coherent theoretical approach to the interrelationships of the reading and writing processes is needed. In light of the post-Einsteinian scientific paradigm and Peircean semiotics, reading and writing are seen as always involving individuals, with their particular linguistic/experiential resources, in particular transactions with particular environments or contexts. Analyses of the reading and writing processes reveal parallelisms in patterns of symbolization and construction of meaning. The processes associated with "literary" and "nonliterary" reading and writing concern the reader's or writer's stance, which can fall into different parts of the "efferent/aesthetic continuum": stance is determined by the proportion of public or private linguistic activity which is admitted into the scope of selective attention--the "efferent" stance, which is concerned chiefly with what can be "carried away" or used, draws on the public aspect of sense, whereas the aesthetic stance includes proportionally more of the experiential, private aspect. Differences between these processes defeat the notion of an automatic cross-fertilization of reading and writing activities. A well-rounded humanistic education encompasses both aspects of the continuum, teaching students to differentiate the circumstances that call for a particular stance. (A figure of the efferent/aesthetic continuum is included, and 21 references are appended.) (MM)

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A READING RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER REPORT

Technical Report No. 416

WRITING AND READING: THE TRANSACTIONAL THEORY

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January 1988

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Abstract

In the light of the post-Einsteinian scientific paradigm and Peircean semiotics, reading and writing are seen as always involving individuals, with their particular linguistic/experiential resources, in particular transactions with particular environments or contexts. Analyses of the reading and writing processes reveal parallelisms in patterns of symbolization and construction of meaning. Special attention is given to a dimension usually ignored: the processes associated with "literary" and "non-literary" reading and writing. Differences, however, defeat the notion of an automatic cross-fertilization of reading and writing activities. Conditions are set forth for creating a teaching environment favorable to such cross-fertilization.

WRITING AND READING: THE TRANSACTIONAL THEORY

A conference focused on the relationship between reading and writing signals an already-widespread recognition that these two kinds of linguistic activity are closely linked. Sponsorship by two centers of research reflects the fact that recent decades have seen much publication concerning these fields, and that various research projects involving their connections are in progress. Why, then, a paper devoted to theory? The answer is that any research project, any teaching method, rests on some kind of epistemological assumptions, and, in this field, some models of the reading and writing processes. We need constantly to scrutinize the assumptions underlying our practices, to see how they relate to one another and to long-term educational goals.

In recapitulating my transactional theory, I am aware that in the past decade an atmosphere favorable to this point of view has developed. To refer to the various theorists and researchers on reading and writing who have drawn on this approach, or whose work is congenial,would require extended discussion of points of agreement and disagreement. My concern here is, in the light of general trends, to present a coherent theoretical approach to the interrelationships of the reading and writing processes.[1]

The relationship between reading and writing encompasses a network of parallelisms and differences. Reading and writing share a necessary involvement with texts. Hence, both lack the nonverbal aids to communication afforded the speaker and listener. Yet writing and reading obviously differ in that the writer starts with a blank page and must produce a text, while the reader starts with the already-written or printed text and must produce meaning. A similarity, however, is currently being stressed: The writer "composes" a presumably meaningful text; the reader "composes," hence "writes," an interpreted meaning. The metaphor, though useful for similarities, glosses over certain differences in the two ways of composing. Again, it is increasingly being recognized that reading is an integral part of the writing process. But the writer's reading both resembles and differs from the reader's: I shall identify at least two different kinds of reading special to the writer. Moreover, my view of the writing and reading processes implied by such generally-accepted contrasts as "expository/poetic" or "literary/nonliterary" will add still another dimension.

The Transactional Paradigm

My use of the terms "transaction" and "transactional" is consonant with the contemporary twentieth-century shift in thinking about the relationship of human beings to the natural world. In *Knowing and the Known*, John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley pointed out that the term "interaction" had become too closely tied to Cartesian or Newtonian philosophical dualism, the paradigm that treats human beings and nature as separate entities. The newer paradigm, reflecting especially Einsteinian and subatomic developments in physics, emphasizes their reciprocal relationship. The scientist, "the observer," to use Niels Bohr's phrasing, is seen as "part of his observation" (1959, p. 210). Instead of separate, already-defined entities acting on one another (an "interaction"), Dewey and Bentley (1949, p. 69) suggested that the term "transaction" be used to designate relationships in which each element conditions and is conditioned by the other in a mutually-constituted situation. This requires a break with entrenched habits of thinking. The old stimulus-response, subject-object, individual-social dualisms give way to recognition that such relationships take place in a context that also enters into the event. Human activities and relationships are seen as transactions in which the individual, and the social, cultural, and natural elements interfuse. The transactional mode of thinking has perhaps been most clearly assimilated in ecology. Current writers on philosophy and semiology (e.g., Bruner, 1986; Rorty, 1982; Toulmin, 1982), though they may differ on metaphysical implications, find it necessary to come to terms with the new paradigm.

Language. The transactional concept has profound implications for understanding language activities in general, and reading and writing specifically. Traditionally, language has been viewed as primarily a

self-contained system or code, a set of arbitrary rules and conventions, manipulated as a tool by speakers and writers, or imprinting itself upon the minds of listeners and readers. This way of thinking is so deeply engrained that it continues to function, tacitly or explicitly, in much supposedly innovative literary theory and rhetoric. The influence of the great French semiotician, Ferdinand de Saussure, plays a part in this: Despite his recognition of the difference between actual language and the abstractions of linguists and lexicographers, his formulation of a dyadic, or two-element relationship, between "signifier and signified," between word and object, has lent itself to the conception of language as an autonomous system.

In contrast, Charles Sanders Peirce, the American founder of semiotics, offers a triadic formulation congenial to a transactional sense of human beings in their environment. "A sign," Peirce wrote, "is in conjoint relation to the thing denoted and to the mind. . . . The sign is related to its object only in consequence of a mental association, and depends on habit" (1933, para. 360). Since Peirce evidently did not want to reinforce the notion that "mind" was an entity, he typically phrased the "conjoint" linkage as among sign, object, and "interpretant" (1935, para. 347). This triadic model grounds language and the processes involved in speaking, listening, writing, and reading firmly in the individual's transactions with the world.[2]

Psychologists' studies of children's acquisition of language support the Peircean triad. For example, Werner and Kaplan, in their work on *Symbol Formation*, conclude that a vocalization or sign becomes a word, a verbal symbol, when the sign and its object or referent are linked with the same "organismic state" (1962, p. 18). William James had noted such a linkage when he said that not only the words referring to objects, but also the words naming the relationships among them carry "an inward coloring of their own" in the stream of consciousness (1890, p. 245). This rich experiential aura of language is different for each of us. As L. S. Vygotsky pointed out, "the sense" of a word is "the sum of all the psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the word" (1962, p. 146).

Language, we know, is a socially-generated public system of communication--the very bloodstream of any society. But it is often forgotten that language is always internalized by an individual human being in transaction with a particular environment. "Lexical concepts must be shared by speakers of a common language, . . . yet there is room for considerable individual difference in the details of any concept" (Miller & Johnson-Laird, 1976, p. 700). And traces of cumulatively-funded personal experiences remain. Bates uses the image of an iceberg for the total sense of a word, with the tip of the iceberg representing the public aspect of meaning, resting on the submerged base of private meaning (1979, p. 66). The dictionary lists the public, lexical meanings of a word. No language act, however, can be thought of as totally public or totally private. Always anchored in individuals, it necessarily involves both public and private elements, the base as well as the tip of the "iceberg." And, although we speak of individual signs or words, we know that words do not function in isolation, but always in particular verbal, personal, and social contexts.

The individual's share in the language, then, is that part, or set of features, of the public system that has been internalized in the individual's experiences with words in life situations. The residue of such transactions in particular natural and social contexts constitutes a kind of linguistic-experiential reservoir. Embodying our funded assumptions, attitudes, and expectations about the world--and about language--this inner capital is all that each of us has to start from in speaking, listening, writing, and reading. We make meaning, we make sense of a new situation or transaction, by applying, reorganizing, revising, or extending elements drawn from, selected from, our personal linguistic-experiential reservoir.

Selective attention. William James tells us that we are constantly engaged in a "choosing activity," which he termed "selective attention" (1890, 1:284). We are constantly selecting out from the stream, or field, of consciousness "by the reinforcing and inhibiting agency of attention" (1:288). This activity is sometimes termed "the cocktail party phenomenon": In a crowded room, where various conversations are in progress, we focus our attention on only one of them at a time, and the others

become a background hum. Similarly, we can turn our attention toward a broader or narrower area of the field.[3] The transactional concept will prevent our falling into the error of envisaging selective attention as a mechanical choosing among an array of fixed entities, rather than as a dynamic centering on areas or aspects of the contents of consciousness.

Thus, while language activity implies an intermingled kinaesthetic, cognitive, affective, associational matrix, what is brought into awareness, what is pushed into the background or suppressed, depends on where the attention is focused. The linguistic reservoir should not be seen as encompassing verbal signs statically linked to meanings, like typewriter keys to fixed letters, but as a fluid pool of potential triadic symbolizations. Such residual linkages of sign, signifier, and organic state, it will be seen, become actual symbolizations as selective attention functions under the shaping influence of particular times and circumstances.

In the linguistic event, any process will be affected also by the physical and emotional state of the individual, e.g., by fatigue or stress. Attention may be controlled or wandering, intense or superficial. In the discussion that follows, it will be assumed that such factors enter into the transaction and affect the quality of the process under consideration.

The Reading Process

The reading transaction. The transactional nature of language and the concepts of transaction and selective attention illuminate what happens in reading. Every reading act is an event, a transaction involving a particular reader and a particular configuration of marks on a page, and occurring at a particular time in a particular context. Certain organismic states, certain ranges of feeling, certain verbal or symbolic linkages, are stirred up in the linguistic reservoir. From these activated areas, to phrase it most simply, selective attention--conditioned by multiple personal and social factors entering into the situation--picks out elements that synthesize or blend into what constitutes "meaning." The "meaning" does not reside ready-made in the text or in the reader, but happens during the transaction between reader and text.

When we see a set of marks on a page that we believe can be made into verbal signs (i.e., can be seen as a text), we assume that it should give rise to some kind of more or less coherent meaning. We bring our funded experience to bear. Multiple inner alternatives resonate to the words as they fall into phrases and sentences. From the very beginning, and often even before, some expectation, some tentative feeling or principle or purpose, no matter how vague at first, guides selection and synthesis. As the eyes encounter the unfolding text, one seeks cues on which, in the light of past syntactic and semantic experience, to base expectations about what is forthcoming. The text as a linguistic pattern is part of what is being constructed. Possibilities open up concerning diction, syntax, linguistic and literary conventions, ideas, themes, the general kind of "meaning" that may be developed. Each additional sentence will signal certain options and exclude others, so that even as "the meaning" develops, the selecting, synthesizing impulse is itself constantly shaped and tested. If the marks on the page evoke elements that cannot be assimilated into the emerging synthesis, the guiding principle or framework is revised: if necessary, it is discarded and a complete rereading occurs. New tentative guidelines, new bases for a hypothetical structure, present themselves. A complex, non-linear, self-correcting transaction between reader and text continues--the arousal and fulfillment (or frustration) of expectations, the construction of a growing, often revised, "meaning." Finally, a synthesis or organization, more or less coherent and complete, emerges, the result of a to-and-fro interplay between reader and text.

The reader's stance. An important distinction is usually neglected: The reading process that produces the meaning, say, of a scientific report differs from the reading process that evokes a literary work of art. Neither contemporary reading theory nor literary theory has done justice to this question. In the past, the tendency generally has been to assume that such a distinction depends entirely on the texts involved. The character of the "work" has been held to inhere entirely in the

text. Such classifications of texts as literary or nonliterary ignore the contribution of the reader. We cannot look at the text and predict the nature of the resulting work in any particular reading. Before we can assume, for instance, that a poem or novel, rather than a statement of facts, will be evoked from the texts, say, of Frost's *Mending Wall* or Dickens' *Great Expectations*, we must postulate a particular kind of relationship between the reader and the text.

Essential to any reading is the reader's adoption, conscious or unconscious, of a stance. As the transaction with the printed text stirs up elements of the linguistic/experiential reservoir, the reader adopts a selective attitude, bringing certain aspects into the center of attention and pushing others into the fringes. A stance reflects the reader's purpose. The reading-event must fall somewhere in a continuum, determined by whether the reader adopts what I term "the predominantly aesthetic" stance or "the predominantly efferent" stance. The difference in stance determines the proportion or mix of public and private elements of sense that fall within the scope of attention.

The kind of reading in which attention is centered predominantly on what is to be carried away or retained *after* the reading event I term "efferent" (after the Latin *efferre*, to carry away). An extreme example is the man who has accidentally swallowed a poisonous liquid and who is rapidly reading the label on the bottle to learn the antidote. Here, surely, we see an illustration of James' point about "selective attention" and our capacity to push into the periphery of awareness those elements that do not serve our present interests. The man's attention is focused on learning what is to be done as soon as the reading ends. He concentrates on what the words point to, their barest public referents, and on constructing the directions for future action. Reading a newspaper, a textbook, or a legal brief would usually provide a similar, though less extreme, instance of the predominantly efferent stance. In efferent reading, then, we focus attention mainly on the public "tip of the iceberg" of sense: The meaning results from an abstracting-out and analytic structuring of the ideas, information, directions, conclusions to be retained, used, or acted on after the reading event.

The predominantly aesthetic stance covers the other half of the continuum. In this kind of reading, the reader adopts an attitude of readiness to focus attention on what is being lived through *during* the reading event. Welcomed into awareness are not only the public referents of the verbal signs but also the rest of the "iceberg" of sense, the sensations, images, feelings, and ideas that are the residue of past psychological events involving those words and their referents. Attention may even include the sounds and rhythms of the words themselves, heard in "the inner ear." The aesthetic reader experiences, savors, the qualities of the structured ideas, situations, scenes, personalities, emotions, called forth, participating in the tensions, conflicts, and resolutions as they unfold. This lived-through meaning is felt to correspond to the text. This meaning evoked during the aesthetic transaction constitutes "the literary work," the poem, story, or play. This evocation, and not the text, is the object of the reader's "response" and "interpretation" both during and after the reading event.

To recognize the essentiality of stance does not minimize the importance of the text in the transaction. Various verbal elements--for example, divergence from linguistic or semantic norms, metaphor, formal or stylistic conventions--have even been said to constitute the "poeticity" or "literariness" of a text. None of these arrangements of words could make their "literary" (i.e., aesthetic) contribution, however, without the reader's prior shift of attention toward the qualitative or experiential contents of consciousness. Such verbal elements, actually, often serve as cues to the reader to adopt an aesthetic stance.

The efferent/aesthetic continuum. Thus, one of the earliest and most important steps in any reading event is the selection of either an efferent or an aesthetic stance toward the transaction with the text. Although many readings may fall near the extremes, many others, and perhaps most, may fall nearer the center of the continuum, where both parts of the "iceberg" of meaning are more evenly involved. Also, within a particular aesthetic reading, attention may turn from the experiential synthesis to efferent analysis, as some technical strategy is recognized or literary judgment is passed. Similarly, in an efferent reading, a general idea may be illustrated or reinforced by an aesthetically lived-through

illustration or example. Despite the mix of private and public aspects of meaning in each stance, the two dominant stances are clearly distinguishable: Someone else can read a text efferently for us, and acceptably paraphrase it. No one else can read aesthetically, that is, experience the evocation of, a literary work of art for us.

Since each reading is an event in particular circumstances, the same text may be read either efferently or aesthetically. The experienced reader usually approaches a text alert to cues offered by the text and, unless another purpose intervenes, automatically adopts the appropriate predominant stance. Sometimes the title suffices as a cue. Probably one of the most obvious cues is the arrangement of broad margins and uneven lines that signals that the reader should adopt the aesthetic stance and try to make a poem. The opening lines of any text are especially important from this point of view, for their signaling of tone, attitude, and conventional indications of stance to be adopted. Of course, the reader may overlook or misconstrue the cues as to stance, or they may be confusing. And the reader's own purpose, or schooling that indoctrinates the same undifferentiated approach to all texts, may dictate a different stance from the one the writer intended. For example, the student reading *A Tale of Two Cities* knowing that there will be a test on "facts" about characters and plot may be led to adopt a predominantly efferent stance, screening out all but the relevant data. Similarly, readings of an article on zoology could range from analytic abstracting of factual content to an aesthetic savoring of the ordered structure of ideas, the rhythm of the sentences, the images of animal life brought into consciousness. Figure 1 indicates how different readings of the same text may fall at different points of the efferent/aesthetic continuum.

[Insert Figure 1 about here.]

The problem of intention. The polysemous character of texts--that there is no one absolutely "correct" meaning of a text--creates the problem of the relation between the reader's interpretation and the author's probable intention. Here we find ourselves moving from the reader-text to the author-text relation, and their interdependence. The reader, we recall, transacts with the text, not directly with the author. And readers may bring to the text past linguistic- and life-experiences and purposes very different from those of the author. Of course, we are often very much interested in inferring the author's intention. But even when, on the basis of extratextual as well as textual evidence, we agree on the author's inferred or stated intentions, we must still transact with the text, to decide whether and to what degree our reading agrees with that intention. Moreover, theorists have not sufficiently noted that the problem of interpretation is broader than the author-text relationship, since texts are also an important means of communication or communion among readers.

The deconstructionists, following certain Nietzschean French writers and treating language as a closed autonomous system, have concluded that since there can be no certainty that the text serves the author's intention, the reader can "write" whatever meaning can be made from any point of view.[4] This complete relativism is not a necessary conclusion from the premises, however. John Dewey, accepting the new epistemological paradigm but foregoing the quest for absolutes, set conditions for "warranted assertibility" in scientific investigation (1938, p. 11). Such a position makes possible agreement concerning the most defensible interpretation according to the shared criteria of evidence, but leaves open the possibility that alternative interpretations for the same facts may be found, or that different criteria or paradigms may be developed.

Similarly, as I have argued elsewhere (1978, Ch. 7; 1983, p. 151ff & *passim*), given a shared cultural milieu and shared criteria of validity of interpretation, we can, without claiming to have the single "correct" meaning, agree on an interpretation. Or we may find that alternative interpretations meet our minimum criteria. In contrast to the notion of readers locked into a narrow "interpretive community" (Fish, 1980), my emphasis on making our underlying assumptions explicit provides the basis not only for agreement but also for understanding the tacit sources of disagreement. Hence the possibility of change and of revision of the criteria. Such self-awareness on the part of readers can

also foster communication across social, cultural, and historical differences between reader and author, and among readers.

In short, the concept of shared criteria of validity of interpretation in a particular social context recognizes that different interpretations of the same physical text may be acceptable, and that some readings may satisfy the criteria more fully than others. Thus, we can be open to alternative readings of the text of *Hamlet*, but also can consider some superior to others according to certain criteria (e.g., as activating and organizing more of the verbal elements). Whether any of the readings reflect the author's intention is a separate question to be judged according to accepted criteria of scholarly investigation.

In both efferent and aesthetic reading, then, the reader may seek as much as possible to "read with the eyes of the author." The sophisticated reader at least understands the problems involved in inferring the author's intention at any point in the aesthetic-efferent continuum. Just as past experiences, prior knowledge, social and psychological assumptions, assumptions about language and literature, enter into the reader's making of meaning, so do these factors become important in recovering the author's intention.

The need for grasping the author's purpose and for a consensus among readers is usually more stringent in efferent reading. Hence the importance of differentiating the criteria of validity for efferent and for aesthetic reading. In efferent reading, the student has to learn to focus attention mainly on the public, referential, aspects of consciousness and to ignore private aspects that might distort or bias the desired publicly verifiable or justifiable interpretation. We have seen that selectivity is equally essential in aesthetic reading, but involves a different scope of attention.

Given the nature of the transaction between author and reader through the medium of the physical text, and given the complexities of criteria of validity of interpretation, both readers and writers need to understand the difficulties and the potentialities of the relationship. Recognizing the symbiotic situation, we can proceed to consider in what ways the basic transactional concepts sketched for reading apply also to writing.

The Writing Process

The writing transaction. Like readers approaching a text, writers facing a blank page have only their individual linguistic capital to draw on. For the writer, too, the residue of past experiences of language, spoken and written, in life situations provides the material from which the text will be constructed. As with the reader, any new "meanings" grow out of, are restructurings or extensions of, the stock of experiences the writer brings to the task.

An important difference should not be minimized, however. In the triadic sign-object-interpretant relationship, the reader has the physical pattern of signs to which to relate the symbolizations. The writer facing a blank page may start with only an organismic state, vague feelings and ideas, which may require further definition before a symbolic configuration--a physical text--can be arrived at.

But writing, which is often spoken of as a solitary activity, is not a matter simply of dipping into a memory-pool. Writing, we know, is always an event in time, occurring at a particular moment in the writer's biography, in particular circumstances, under particular pressures, external as well as internal. In short, the writer is always transacting with a personal, social, and cultural environment. (We shall see that the writer transacts also with the very text being produced.) Thus the writing process must be seen as always embodying both personal and social, or individual and environmental, factors.

Given the Peircean, triadic, view of the verbal symbol, the more accessible the fund of organismically-linked words and referents, the more fluent the writing. This helps us place in perspective an activity such as "free writing." Instead of treating it as a prescriptive "stage" of the writing process, as some

seem to do, it should be seen as a technique for tapping the linguistic reservoir unhampered by anxieties about acceptability of subject, sequence, or mechanics. Especially for those inhibited by unfortunate past writing experiences, this can be liberating, a warm-up exercise for starting the juices flowing, so to speak, and permitting elements of the experiential stream, verbal components of memory, and present concerns, to rise to consciousness. Such free writing may bring onto the page something that the writer will find worthy of further development.

Some established poets and novelists, we know, testify to a persistent sense of merely opening the floodgates, of simply recording their texts, due, as Plato's Socrates suggested, to inspiration from the gods. This can be countered, at the other extreme, by authors who think out and revise whole poems and books, carrying them in their memories before committing the completed work to paper. Most writers fall between these extremes; each needs to develop the personally-most-favorable approach. The essential point is that the individual linguistic reservoir must be activated.

No matter how free and uninhibited the writing may be, however, the stream of images, ideas, memories, words, is not entirely random; William James (1890) reminds us that "selective attention" operates to some degree. Without minimizing the liberating or remedial effect of free writing, we should note the value of bringing the selective process more and more actively into play. Like the reader, the writer needs to move toward a sense of some tentative focus for choice and synthesis. The development of such directedness will be fostered by the writer's awareness of the transactional situation, the context that initiates the need to write and the potential reader or readers to whom the text will presumably be addressed. Often in trial-and-error fashion, and through various freely-flowing drafts, the writer's sensitivity to such factors translates itself into an increasingly clear impulse that guides selective attention and integration. For the experienced writer, the habit of such awareness, manifested in the multifold decisions or choices that make up the writing event, is more important than any explicit preliminary statement of goals or purpose.

The concept of "stance" developed earlier in relation to reading is clearly also important for writing. A major aspect of the delimitation of purpose in writing is the adoption of a stance that falls at some point in the efferent-aesthetic continuum. This will affect how much of public and private aspects of sense in the linguistic/experiential reservoir will be included in the scope of the writer's attention and hence determine the attitude toward the subject. The dominant stance will manifest itself in the range and character of the verbal symbols that will "come to mind," and from which the writer will select.

When we speak of a sense of purpose guiding the selective process, then, we assume, on the one hand, the writer's perception of what is to be communicated, and, on the other, a feeling for the factors that will shape its reception. Whether these two components will produce an intense and alert selective operation depends on a consideration too often neglected in the past, and only now becoming more generally recognized by educators--the relation of all this to the writer's own self and world.

In reading, the continuing sequence of words on the page may prod the reluctant or confused reader to move ahead. But even in reading, if the signs on the page have only tenuous linkages with the experiential reservoir, the reader will often give up the frustrating attempt to make new meanings. For the writer, faced with a blank page, the need for live ideas--i.e., ideas having a strongly energizing linkage with the experiential base--is even greater. We have all seen a student laboriously dragging words out of a stagnant memory, without anything there to move the process along. This happens often when ideas with no links to the reader are lifted out of someone else's text and paraphrased, or when an arbitrary topic or format is assigned.

Purpose should emerge from, or be capable of constructively engaging, the writer's actual experiential and linguistic resources. Past experience need not be the limit of the writer's scope. But purposes or ideas that lack the capacity to connect with and to build on the writer's funded experience and

present concerns cannot activate the linguistic reservoir and, hence, do not provide an impetus to thinking or writing. Here, we are spelling out an important operational source of much of the current criticism of the writing produced in traditional composition courses and in courses across the entire curriculum. Lacking is some purpose growing out of a need to test the ideas, to apply them to specific situations or problems, or some urge to communicate ideas to specific readers.

The matter of degree of intensity of attention adds another dimension to the description of the reading or writing process. Live ideas growing out of situations, activities, discussions, problems, provide the basis for an actively selective and synthesizing process of making meaning. Live ideas have roots drawing sustenance from writers' needs, interests, questions, and values; and live ideas have tendrils reaching out toward external areas of thought. A personally-grounded purpose develops and impels movement forward. The quickened fund of images, ideas, emotions, attitudes, tendencies to act and to think, offers the means for making new connections, for discovering new facets of the world of objects and events, in short, for thinking and writing creatively.

In writing (as in reading) an unexpected juxtaposition of words, the challenge of a new context, or an unsettling question, may open up new lines of thought and feeling. Each sentence tends to eliminate certain possibilities as to the meaning to be built up. At the same time, the newly-formed sentence may reveal implicit areas not thought of before. New ideas, drawing upon new combinations of words and phrases, present themselves. The writer may even choose to start all over again with a firmer guiding principle of selection, a clearer purpose. Such transactions with the text explain why, as Emig (1983) has demonstrated, writing can become a learning process, a process of discovery. This may also explain why some theorists are under the illusion that language "writes" the text.

Once inhibitions due to lack of confidence and worry about correctness are removed, and words flow more readily on to the page, the aspiring writer can be helped to develop a purpose concerning a personally-rooted subject, initially at least in terms of a predominant stance or process of selective attention. This can lead to discovery of an overall purpose, a general idea or effect, and a sense of relations among subordinate elements. We need to recognize that the essential requirement is, not that the subject of the writing be always overtly "personal," but rather that there be some links, sometimes subterranean, so to speak, between the subject and interests, needs, prior knowledge, curiosities, of the writer.

Thus far, we have been developing parallelisms in the ways in which readers and writers select and synthesize elements from the personal linguistic reservoir, adopt stances that guide selective attention, and serve a developing purpose. Emphasis has fallen mainly on similarities in creating or composing structures of meaning related to texts. If all readers are in that sense also writers, it is equally, and perhaps more obviously, true that all writers must also be readers. At this point, however, the differences within the parallelisms begin to appear.

Authorial Reading I. As a reader's eyes move along a printed text, we have observed, the newly-evoked symbolizations are tested for whether they can be fitted into the tentative meanings already constructed for the preceding portion of the text. The writer, as the first reader of the text, similarly peruses the succession of verbal signs being inscribed on the page. But this is a different, writer's, authorial, kind of reading, which should be seen as an integral part of the composing process. The new words, as they appear on the page, must be tested, not simply for how they make sense with the preceding text, but also against something more demanding--whether the emerging meaning serves or hinders the intention, or purpose, however nebulous and inarticulate, that we have seen as the motive power in the writing. This inner-oriented type of authorial reading leads to revision even during the earliest phases of the writing process.

Most writers will recall the situation when a word comes to mind or flows from the pen, and, even if it makes sense, is not right. One word after another may be brought into consciousness and still not satisfy. Sometimes what is wrong with the word on the page may be understood--perhaps that it is

ambiguous or does not suit the tone. But often the writer may not be able to articulate the reason for dissatisfaction. The tension simply disappears when "the right word" presents itself. A match between inner state and verbal sign has happened. Such a "writer's block" can be seen as an interruption of an underlying process in which the words flowing onto the page are being matched against an inner touchstone. This may be an organic state, a mood, an idea, perhaps even a consciously worked-out set of guidelines. Such reverberation or transaction between emerging text and inner state is too much taken for granted or ignored.

For the experienced writer, this kind of completely inner-oriented reading integral to the composing process depends on--and nourishes--a growing though often tacit sense of purpose, whether efferent or aesthetic. In other words, the writer is carrying on a two-way, circular, transactional relationship with the very text being written. In such inner-oriented authorial reading, the writer tries to satisfy, while refining, a personal conception. This kind of reading and revision can go on throughout the writing event. There are indeed times when it is the only reading component, when one writes for oneself alone, to express, give shape to, or record an experience, as in diaries and journals. Or one may write for oneself simply to analyze a situation or the pros and cons of a decision.

Authorial Reading II. Usually, however, writing is felt to be part of a potential transaction with other readers. There comes a point at which the writer must engage in a second type of authorial reading--a point which probably comes earlier the more expert the writer. In this kind of reading, the writer dissociates from the text and reads it with the eyes of potential readers (i.e., tries to judge the meaning *they* would make). This is the kind of writer's reading usually emphasized. But the writer does not simply adopt the "eyes" of the potential reader. A twofold operation is involved. The emerging text must be read in the light both of what others might make of the text and also of how that fits the writer's own inner sense of purpose. Rereading the text at intervals, the writer may alternate the two kinds of inner criteria, or, if sufficiently expert, may merge them.

We must already have some hold on the first, stance-and-purpose-oriented, kind of inner awareness if we are to effectively carry through the second, the reading-through-the-eyes-of-others. The first becomes a criterion for the second. If communication is the aim, revision should be based on such double criteria in the rereading of the text. Thus, writing can be both personally purposive and reader-oriented, reflecting the context of the total transaction. The experienced writer will probably engage in a synthesis, or rapid alternation, of the two kinds of reading.

Writers have spoken of sensing or addressing an ideal reader; this parallels readers' sensing a "voice" or persona often identified with the author. Another parallelism suggests itself: between the second kind of authorial reading-with-the-eyes-of-a-potential-reader, and a reader's effort to sense an author's intention.

The writer's stance. Basic to clarification of purpose in writing, we have seen, is the selection of a predominant stance. In actual life situations, this is not an arbitrary choice, but a function of the circumstances, the subject, the writer's motives, and the relation between writer and prospective reader. For example, someone who had been involved in an automobile collision would need to adopt very different stances in writing an account of the event for an insurance company and in describing it in a letter to a friend. The first would activate an efferent selective process, bringing into the center of consciousness and onto the page the public aspects, such as statements that could be verified by witnesses or by investigation of the terrain. Banished to the periphery of attention would be everything but the facts and their impersonal significance. In the letter to a friend, the purpose would be to share an experience. An aesthetic stance would bring within the scope of the writer's attention the same basic facts, and also the feelings, sensations, tensions, sights and sounds lived through during this brush with death. The selective process would favor words that would not only match the writer's inner sense of the felt event, but would also set into motion in the prospective reader symbolic linkages evoking a similar experience. Given different purposes, other accounts might fall at other points on the efferent-aesthetic continuum. For the benefit of potential readers, it

is important to choose, and to provide clear cues as to, either a predominantly efferent or a predominantly aesthetic stance (see Figure 1). Sensitivity to purpose and context would bring into play both kinds of authorial reading.

Communication undoubtedly is easiest to achieve when both writer and reader share not only the same native language system but also similar cultural, social, and educational contexts. But even in these circumstances, individual differences persist (as we see among even members of the same family). Moreover, in our complex society, we all are members of a network of varied subgroups and even subcultures. The writer must draw on what can be presumed to be shared with the reader as the materials for creating the new meaning to be communicated. Whether this intention will be fulfilled depends largely on the writer's taking into account the resemblances and the differences between what the potential reader will bring to the text and the linguistic and life experience from which the writing springs.

Here, again, we must underline the difference between ordinary reading of another's text and the second kind of authorial reading of one's own text in the light of other's needs. Children, we know, must be helped to realize that what was "in their heads" will not necessarily be conveyed to others by what is on the page. Inexperienced writers of college age and beyond have been found to still share this handicap. Actually, to dissociate from one's text in order to read it with another's eyes is a highly sophisticated activity. The writer's problem is to offer verbal cues that will set in motion the linkages in the potential reader's inner repertory that will lead to the intended meaning. To accomplish such translation, so to speak, the writer requires both self-understanding and understanding of others, awarenesses that may be intuitive but can also be explicitly fostered.

The second type of authorial reading demands, then, a sense of what is taken for granted in the text--the knowledge that the potential reader is expected to bring, the conventional expectations based on prior reading and linguistic experience, the assumptions about social situations or the environment, the implicit moral, social, or scientific criteria. Some literary theorists make much of the gaps in an author's text that the reader will be called on to fill in. From the writer's point of view, however, it is important to stress rather the gaps that have to be avoided, the assumptions that should be made explicit, the experiences that have to be spelled out, before the text is sent out to make its way in the world.

Writing about reading. It is now increasingly recognized that when a reader describes, responds to, or interprets a work, a new text is being produced. The implications of this fact in terms of process should be more fully understood. When the reader becomes a writer, the starting-point is no longer the physical text, the marks on the page, but the meaning, the state of mind felt to correspond to that text. The reader-writer may return to the original text to recapture how it entered into the transaction, but must "find words for" explaining the evocation and the interpretation.

The reader-turned-writer must once again face the problem of choice of stance. In general, the choice seems to be the efferent stance. The purpose is mainly to explain, analyze, summarize, categorize. This is usually true even when the reading has been predominantly aesthetic, and a literary work of art is being discussed. However, the aesthetic stance might be adopted in order to communicate an experience expressing the response or the interpretation. An efferent reading of e.g., the Declaration of Independence might lead to a poem or a story. An aesthetic reading of the text of a poem might also lead, not to an efferently-written critical essay, but to another poem. The translator of a poem is a prime example of this, being first a reader evoking an experience through a transaction in one language, and then becoming a writer seeking to express that experience through a writing transaction in another language. The two modes of authorial reading become especially important in translation, since the experiential qualities generated in a transaction with one language must now be communicated to readers who bring a different linguistic reservoir.

Conditions for Constructive Cross-Fertilization

Parallelisms and differences. Descriptions of the reading and writing processes, we have seen, both overlap and differ. Whether the verbal signs are already present, produced by someone else, as for the reader, or emergent, being produced, as by the writer, both reader and writer are engaged in constituting symbolic structures of meaning in a to-and-fro, circular transaction with the text. They follow similar patterns of thinking, and engage similar linguistic habits. Both processes depend on the individual's past experiences with language in particular life situations. Both reader and writer therefore are drawing on past linkages of signs, signifiers, and organic states in order to create new symbolizations, new linkages and new organic states. Both reader and writer develop a framework, principle, or purpose, however nebulous or explicit, that guides the selective attention and the synthesizing, organizing activities that constitute meaning. Moreover, every reading and writing act can be understood as falling somewhere on the efferent/aesthetic continuum, as being predominantly one or the other.

Yet the parallelisms should not mask the basic difference--the transaction that starts with a text produced by someone else is not the same as a transaction that starts with the individual before a blank page. To an observer, two people perusing a typed page may seem to be doing the same thing (i.e., "reading"). But if one of them is in process of writing that text, different activities will be going on. The writer will be engaged in some form of authorial reading. Moreover, since both reading and writing are rooted in mutually conditioning transactions between individuals and their particular environments, a person, we know, may have very different experiences with the two activities and may differ in attitudes toward, and proficiency in, them. Writing and reading are sufficiently different to defeat the assumption that they are mirror-images, that the reader simply reenacts the author's process, and especially that the teaching of one will automatically improve the student's competence in the other.

Still, the interconnectedness of writing and reading is closer than the generally recognized fact that each can serve as a stimulus and support to the other, that is, that the writer discovers the need to read in order to enlarge knowledge and experience, and that the reader is moved to write to record, express, and clarify ideas and feelings that flow from reading. The parallelisms, and, in many instances, intermingling of the reading and writing processes described above make it reasonable to expect that the teaching of one can affect the student's operations in the other. How fruitful that will be, however, depends on the nature of the teaching and the educational context.

The total context. Constructive cross-fertilization would be at the level of reinforcement of linguistic habits and thinking patterns resulting from heightened sensitivity to the transactional processes shared by reading and writing. Here we return to our basic concept, that human activity is always in transaction, in a reciprocal relationship, with an environment, a context, a total situation. Teachers and pupils in the classroom are transacting with one another and the school environment; their context broadens to include the whole institutional, social, and cultural environment. All of these elements enter into the transaction and cannot ultimately be ignored in thinking about education and especially the "literacy problem." Hence the necessity for at least insisting that the reading and writing processes set forth here can be inhibited or fostered by contextual and personal elements entering into the transaction that, for example, affect the individual's attitude toward the self, toward the reading or writing activity, or toward the purpose for which it is being carried on.

Viewing the text always in relation either to author or reader in specific situations prevents treating the text as an isolated entity or overemphasizing either the author or the reader. Recognizing that language is not a self-contained system or static code avoids, on the one hand, the traditional obsession with the product--with skills, techniques and conventions, essential though they are--or, on the other, a pendulum swing to overemphasis on the personal or on process. Nor can the transactional view of the reading and writing processes be turned into a set of stages to be rigidly followed. Such extremes are avoided by treating the writer's drafts and final texts--or the reader's

tentative interpretations, final evocation, and reflections--as the stopping points in a journey, as the outward and visible signs of a process that goes on in the passage from one point to the other. A "good" product, whether a "well-written" paper or a sound textual interpretation, should not be an end in itself, a terminus, but should be the result of a process that builds the strengths for further journeys, or, to change the metaphor, for further growth. "Product" and "process" become interlocking concerns.

Such teaching will permit constructive cross-fertilization of the reading and writing processes. Effective communication must be rooted in, must grow out of, the ability of individual writers and readers to generate meaning. The teaching of reading and writing at any level should become, first of all, the creation of environments and activities in which students are motivated and encouraged to draw on their own resources to make "live" meanings. With this as the fundamental criterion, emphasis falls on strengthening the basic processes that we have seen to be shared by reading and writing. The teaching of one can then reinforce linguistic habits and semantic approaches useful in the other.

Enriching the individual's linguistic/experiential reservoir and enabling the student to freely draw on it become underlying aims broader than the particular concern with either reading or writing. Many current teaching practices--the kinds of questions, the phrasing of assignments, the types of tests, the classroom atmosphere--counteract the very processes presumably being taught, and foster manipulation of empty verbal abstractions. Treatment of either reading or writing as a dissociated set of skills (though both require skills) or as primarily the acquisition of codes and conventions (though both involve them) inhibits sensitivity to the organic linkages of verbal signs and signifieds. Purposive writing and reading will enable the student to build on past experience of life and language and to practice the kinds of selective attention and synthesis that produce new structures of live meaning.

Collaborative interchange. In a favorable educational environment, speech is a vital ingredient. Its importance in the individual's acquisition of a linguistic/experiential capital is clear. Moreover, it can be an extremely important medium in the classroom. Interchange, dialogue, between teacher and students and among students, can foster growth and cross-fertilization in both the reading and writing processes. Such transactions can help students to develop metalinguistic insights in a highly personal and, hence, instructive way. The aim should be, not simply "correct" or "excellent" performance, but metalinguistic understanding of skills and conventions in meaningful contexts.

Students' achievement of insight into their own reading and writing processes should be seen as the long-term justification for various curricular and teaching strategies. Peer reading and discussion of texts, for example, have been found effective in helping writers at all levels understand their transactional relationship to their readers. The questions, varied interpretations, and misunderstandings of fellow students dramatize the fact that the writer must provide verbal signs that will enable readers in turn to draw on their own resources to make, it is hoped, the intended meaning. The writer can become aware of the responsibility for providing verbal means that will help readers gain required facts, share relevant sensations or attitudes, or make logical transitions. Such insights make possible the second, reader-oriented, kind of authorial reading.

By the same token, group interchange about the texts of established authors can also be a powerful means of stimulating growth in reading ability and critical acumen. Sharing their responses, learning how their evocations from the same text differ, returning to the text to discover their own habits of selection and synthesis, students can become aware of, and critical of, their own processes as readers. Interchange about the problems of interpretation that a particular group of readers encounters, and a collaborative movement toward self-critical interpretation of the text, can lead to the development of critical concepts and criteria of validity of interpretation. Such metalinguistic awareness is valuable to them as both readers and writers. The teacher, no longer a dispenser of ready-made ideas and formulas, becomes the facilitator of such interchange among students.[5]

The dynamic discovery of metalinguistic insights contrasts with the static and formalistic analysis of "model" or canonic texts, typical alike of traditional composition and literature courses. Neophyte writers and readers should be encouraged to engage, first of all, in personally-meaningful transactions with the texts of established authors. In this dynamic way, texts can serve as models, as sources from which to assimilate a sense of the potentialities of the English sentence, and of strategies for organizing meaning and expressing feeling. Formal analysis can then serve a valuable function, since it answers a writer's own problems in expression or explains to a reader how the verbal signs entered into the transaction.

A rounded, humanistic education necessarily encompasses the efferent/aesthetic continuum, the two basic ways of looking at the world. Students need to learn to differentiate the circumstances that call for one or the other stance. But recall that both stances involve cognitive and affective, public and private, elements. Despite the overemphasis on the efferent in our schools, failure to understand this has prevented successful teaching even of efferent reading and writing. Teaching practices and curriculums, from the very beginning, should include both efferent and aesthetic linguistic activity, should foster the habits of selective attention and synthesis that draw on relevant elements of the semantic reservoir, and should nourish the ability to handle the mix of private and public aspects appropriate to any particular transaction. Especially in the early years, this should be largely indirect, for example, through choice of texts, phrasing of assignments in writing and reading, implications concerning stance in the questions asked. Unfortunately, much current practice is counterproductive, either failing to encourage a definite stance, or implicitly requiring an inappropriate one. A favorite illustration is the third-grade workbook that prefaced its first poem with the question, "What facts does this poem teach you?" Small wonder that graduates of our schools (and even colleges) often read poems and novels efferently, or political statements and advertisements with an aesthetic stance.

Research. Given the transactional paradigm, the old dualistic experimental research design, with its treatment of student and text as separate, static entities acting on one another in a presumably neutral context, cannot suffice for the questions and hypotheses presented here.[6] Although the experimental model may still have its uses, extrapolation of results to practical situations should be very cautious. Moreover, no matter how much we may generalize quantitatively about groups, reading and writing are always carried on by individuals. If research is to serve education, the linguistic transaction should be studied above all as a dynamic phenomenon happening in a particular context, as part of the ongoing life of the individual in a particular educational, social, and cultural environment. We need to learn how the student's attitudes and self-understandings are formed and enter into the reading/writing event. Increasing interest can be noted in the contributions of case studies and ethnographic methods, in addition to more sophisticated statistical methods. Research methodologies and designs will need to be sufficiently complex and sufficiently varied and interlocking to do justice to the fact that reading and writing transactions are at once intensely individual and intensely social activities.

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Footnotes

[1]For a fuller presentation, dealing with such questions as openness and constraints of the text, the relationship of evocation, interpretation, and criticism, see Rosenblatt, 1978, and 1983.

[2]The spoken sign, the vocalization, usually comes first, of course, and its connection with the written sign is a complex question being explored by linguists, psychologists, and philosophers. By grounding language in the individual's transactions with the environment, the triadic model can serve the written, as well as the spoken, sign.

[3]"A combination of behaviorism and positivism" [during the first half of the twentieth century led to neglect of] "the concept of attention. . . . By the 1970s, however, the concept was resurrected, and today's psychologists have reasserted its importance for professional psychology." (Myers, 1986, p. 181). See also Blumenthal, 1977, Ch. 2, "Consciousness and Attention."

[4]Since the present essay is concerned primarily with the processes essential to the making of meaning in reading and writing, it is not possible to discuss the currently controversial question of the critical framework which students should be helped to apply to their evocations (see Rosenblatt, 1978, Ch. 7, and 1983, Parts II and III.) Deconstructionists (e.g., Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes and their American disciple, J. Hillis Miller) are mentioned here only in order to clarify the transactional position on the matter of intention (see J. Culler, 1982).

[5]A course combining the traditional teaching of "composition" and "introduction to literature," for example, compounds the obstacles in both fields. Approaching the text with a set of literary categories and topics for the conventional critical essay, the student is hindered from savoring the aesthetic transaction that could provide the springboard for "live" writing. In many classes, the teacher, even when duly permitting personal comments, reverts to the traditional fixation on the text and expounds the "correct" or "sound" interpretation of the story or essay. The result is that students soon lose interest or confidence in their own interpretive activities, and fail to develop the actively selective attention necessary for effective reading, both efferent and aesthetic.

[6]For fuller discussion of implications for research, see Rosenblatt, 1985a, pp. 40-51, and 1985b.

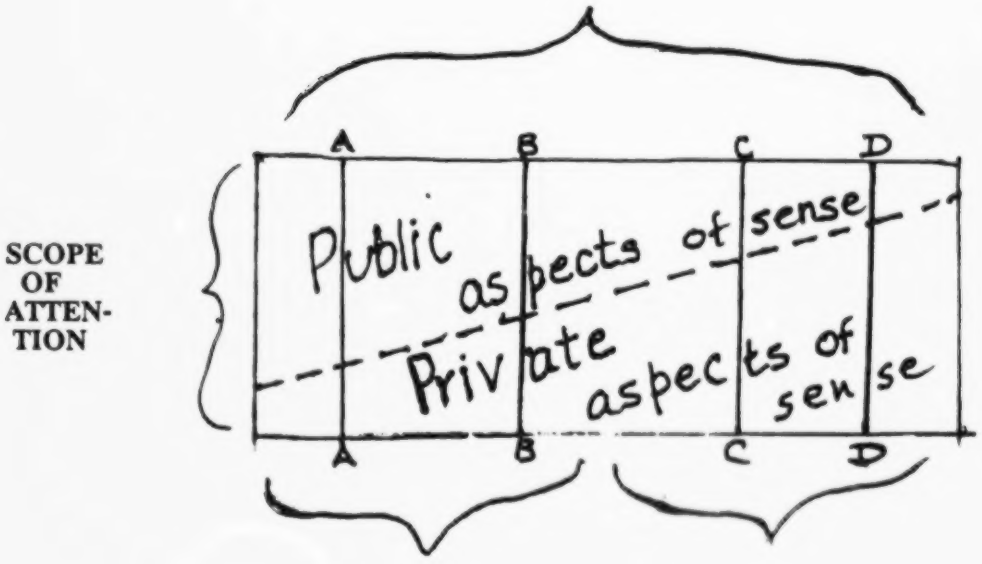
Figure Caption

Figure 1. The Efferent/Aesthetic Continuum.

Figure 1

THE EFFERENT/AESTHETIC CONTINUUM

READING OR WRITING EVENTS



Any linguistic activity has both public (lexical, analytic, abstracting) and private (experiential, affective, associational) components. Stance is determined by the proportion of each admitted into the scope of selective attention. The efferent stance draws mainly on the public aspect of sense. The aesthetic stance includes proportionally more of the experiential, private aspect.

Reading or writing events (A) and (B) fall into the efferent part of the continuum, with (B) admitting more private elements.

Reading or writing events (C) and (D) both represent the aesthetic stance, with (C) according a higher proportion of attention to the public aspects of sense.